DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 751 FL 024 692

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TITLE A Study on Peer Interaction between English Speaking and Non-English Speaking Students in the Primary Grades.

PUB DATE 1997-05-00

NOTE 52p.; Master's Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University, and IRI/Skylight.

PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Attitude Change; Change Strategies; Classroom Communication; Classroom Techniques; *Cooperative Learning; Cross Cultural Training; Cultural Awareness; *Elementary School Students; *English (Second Language); Grade 1; Grade 2; Instructional Effectiveness; *Intercultural Communication; Interpersonal Communication; Kindergarten; Language Attitudes; Native Speakers; Negative Attitudes; *Peer Relationship; Primary Education; Sociocultural Patterns; Spanish Speaking; *Student Participation

ABSTRACT

The report describes a study of the interaction between native Spanish-speaking and native English-speaking students in four classes (one kindergarten, one first-grade, and two second-grade) in a suburban community, and a program to increase interaction. Initially, lack of interaction between these groups was documented using classroom observation, structured interviews, and teachers' anecdotal information. Probable causes for interaction difficulties were identified, including cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences and inadequate social skills. It was determined that in addition to negatively affecting students' school and peer involvement, lack of interaction may also be promoting prejudicial attitudes. A review of solution strategies suggested in the professional literature and analysis of the problem setting resulted in use of cooperative learning strategies and cultural awareness training to ameliorate the problem. Post-intervention data show slight to significant increases in peer interaction between same- and different-language students in all areas measured, attributed to the intervention. Appended materials include the peer interaction observation checklist used, the interview format, sample social studies, language arts, math, and social skills lesson plans, and a bibliography of multicultural children's literature. Contains 25 references. (MSE)

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A STUDY ON PEER INTERACTION BETWEEN ENGLISH SPEAKING AND NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING STUDENTS IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Kay Antonopoulos
Sondra Cimaroli
Barbara Moran
Kim Power

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May, 1997

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for increasing interaction between Spanish speaking and native English speaking children. The targeted population consists of one kindergarten, one first grade, and two third grade classes in a low to middle class community in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. The problem of lack of interaction will be documented through peerinteraction checklists, socio-grams, and teacher anecdotal records.

Probable causes include cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences, as well as inadequate social skills among the students. The problem is significant because this lack of interaction has a negative effect not only on the students' school and peer involvement, but may promote prejudicial attitudes as well.

A review of solution strategies suggested in professional literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of implementing cooperative learning strategies and incorperating multicultural awareness.

Post-intervention data indicates that there were slight to significant increases from pre-treatment to post-treatment data in peer interactions between same and different language students, in all of the areas measured. These changes were a direct result of the integration of the treatment (cooperative learning strategies and multicultural education) to the curriculum.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

There is a noticeable lack of interaction between Spanish speaking students and native English speaking students at the targeted elementary school which negatively affects the school climate and peer relationships. The lack of interaction is manifested through minimal peer verbal interaction, segregated play, and refusal to choose one another for partnered activities. This problem is evidenced through teacher checklists, teacher records, and teacher entries.

Immediate Problem Context

The site school was opened in 1961 as a K-6 elementary building. A second wing was added for the 1963-64 school year, approximately doubling the size of the original building. The one story building was again enlarged in 1991. The medium sized elementary school is located at the corner of a busy thoroughfare and a residential street near a large enclosed shopping mall. The school is located in a middle of a low socioeconomic area composed of single family dwellings, condominiums, rental apartments, and townhouses. Some housing is government subsidized. The neighborhood is part of a northwest suburb of a large midwestern city.

The site school has an enrollment of 537 students consisting of 54.4% white, 1.1% black, 28.8% Hispanic, 17.1% Asian/Pacific islander, and 0.6% native American. 27.4% of the students are from low income families, and 25.9% are limited English proficient. Of the 191 children receiving free and reduced lunches, 159 are Hispanic. Attendance at the school is 95.8%, and there is a student mobility rate of 11.2%.

The site school district faculty consists of 107 teachers and administrators with an average of 14 years of experience. 53% have bachelors degrees, and 46.9% have earned masters degrees. The elementary pupil/teacher ration is 25:1. For the 1996-97 school year, the site school has one section of pre K, and four sections each of kindergarten through grade 5. There is a full time principal, psychologist, social worker, bilingual Spanish/English nurse, three chapter 1 reading teachers, a gifted program teacher, learning center teacher, learning disabilities resource person, two physical education teachers, two music teachers, two art teachers, and additional support personnel. There are four bilingual teachers and an aide.

The 1995-96 school year Limited English Proficient (LEP) program served approximately 171 students, and increase of 77% from 16 years ago when the first ESL class started at the site school. There were three ESL teachers, five bilingual teachers, and four aides. During the 1996-97 school year, the ESL program will be housed in the district's other elementary school, leaving the bilingual program at the site school. During the 1995-96 school year, there were 24 bilingual students in K, 18 in first, 24 in second, 14 in third, and 14 in fourth grade. The 1996-97 school year has seen an increase in these numbers. The figures are 38 in K, 24 in first, 24 in second, 14 in third, 14 in fourth, and 14 in fifth grade.

The site school bilingual program for the 1996-97 school year will be staffed by four bilingual teachers and one bilingual aide. Bilingual teachers will attend grade level meetings and will be available for questions and concerns about students in the program. The student/teacher ratio will be as follows:

K: two teachers for 38 students

1: two teachers for 24 students

2: one teacher for 17 students

3: one teacher and one aide for 24 students

4: (most limited): one teacher for 4 students

5: one teacher for 14 students

6: one teacher for 14 students

Bilingual students will have bilingual classes for one half of the school day (except for the most limited who will have the entire day), and the other half of the day will be spent in homerooms.

The goals of the bilingual program are to maintain the student's academic learning while transitioning them into English, and to mainstream students once they have reached their grade level in reading and writing.

The 1995-96 IGAP scores for third graders showed single digits in all three areas (Reading, Math, and Writing) for "Does Not Meet" state standards. In reading, 7% did not meet, 50% met, and 43% exceeded the state standards. In math, 1% did not meet, 53% met, and 46% exceeded the state standards. In writing, 1% did not meet, 64% met, and 35% exceeded the state standards. Children in the bilingual program less than three years did not take the IGAP tests. Therefore, none of the third grade bilingual students were tested.

The Surrounding Community

This school district community is located in a northwest suburb of Chicago, serving an urban population of 19,707 that covers four square miles. The suburb that this community is in has a population of 53,169. The average age is 35. The racial/ethnic background of the community consists of: 82.53% white, 8.56% Hispanic, 7.45% Asian or Pacific Islander, .98 % black, and 2.03% are in poverty.

There are 5,178 housing units in the district. The median house values at $189,000. Single family homes range from $180,000-$400,000. The townhouse go from $100,000-$210,000. Condominiums range from $68,000-$100,000. Homes have a high resale value. Apartments can be rented from $525-$905. The median family income in district 26 is $66,148. In 1989, the per capita income was $20,590. The major employers in the district are the following. Carson Pirie Scott employs 500, United Stationers employs 250, JC Penny Co. employs 240, Montgomery Ward and Co. employs 225.

The school district teaches a student population of 1,708. There are two elementary schools (Preschool-5, average class size of 25) and one middle school (6-8, average class size of 27). According to the 1995 School Report Card, 70% of the students are white, 15% are Hispanic, 13.5% are Asian or Pacific Islander, 1.3% are black, and .2% are native American. There are 11.7% of the students who are limited English proficient and are eligible for bilingual education. 17% of the students come from families who either receive public aid, live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, are supported in foster homes with public funds, or are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunches.

In 1995, the school district celebrated its 100th anniversary. During the first 70 years of its existence, the district was a rural school district. In the mid 1960's, it experienced unparalleled growth which was then followed in the 1970's by a rapid decline in student enrollment. In the late 1990's and into the year 2008, the district will be experiencing a large population growth. The district has been planning for the future. The two elementary schools are noted for their excellent programs. Student achievement in the district, as reported in the state's annual report card, is well above the national norms and among the highest in the northwest suburban area. The emphasis placed on reading with the whole language approach has helped the students achieve outstanding performance in the discipline of language arts.

The district's most recent yearly operating budget was $19,632,000.00. The operating expenditures per pupil are $6,267.00.

There are seven members on the school board. The members live in the community. The district's chief operating officer is the superintendent, who has an assistant superintendent that works with her.

The district has had many accomplishments over the last 100 years. The staff is well-trained and dedicated. 42% of the faculty have more than 16 years experience in the district. Of the 123 administrators and teachers, 55% have a minimum of a Master's degree.

There are some issues that the school district faces. Increase in student population is a problem. Grade levels and programs have been moved around to other buildings. Classrooms

have been made smaller to accommodate all the students. There has been a change with the bilingual program. The Spanish speaking students will be mainstreamed in the classroom for a longer period of time and will be receiving ESL services instead of bilingual services.

Diversification and segregation are a big concern at our school. A contributing factor is that Spanish speaking children live across the street from the school. The other children have to be bussed. The children do not have easy access to each other's houses because of the busy streets. The children do not interact with each other. The faculty did come up with a multicultural guide last year to help address this issue in the classroom, but the problem still exists.

The school district and community have joined together to help with the gang problems. The police have been educating the faculty and students. Across the street from our school is a hang out for a gang. The safety of the community is a concern.

The park district's program is one of the best in the area. The facilities include a swimming pool, miniature golf course, driving range, nature trail and a 9 hole golf course. The residents of the community have easy access to major transportation - O'Hare International Airport, Palwaukee Airport and the Northwestern Rail line. Outstanding medical facilities, Holy Family and Lutheran General Hospitals are nearby. The community has a shopping center that is great for shopping. There are two community colleges and three off-campus sites nearby.

The school district enjoys the support of community groups. In 1991, an education foundation was formed to promote the value of public schools and to provide resources, financial and human, that will enhance the district's educational program. The trustees of the foundation are the business leaders in the community.

National Context of the Problem

Demographics in the United States have changed drastically over the last few decades. In 1965, Congress, reacting to the changing ethnic population in the United States, provided funds that resulted in the formulation of bilingual education programs for lower-class students with

limited English skills through Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Additional funds were allocated with the approval of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act and when the Act was revised in 1974, a greater range of programs were added. Bilingual education was also brought into national attention in the 1974 Supreme Court Case of Lau v. Nicholls. The Court ruled that limited English speaking students were entitled to suitable language instruction in order to protect their constitutional rights to equal educational opportunities. Since 1974, the government has endowed hundreds of millions of dollars to individual states and local school districts to support English as a Second Language instruction (Biehler & Snowman, 1993). To date, the largest linguistic minority group served by these funds has been the Hispanics.

Dealing with national demographic change necessitates more than creating laws and providing funds to bilingual students. The Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) released a study in 1996 that took a serious look at the English as a Second Language standards for students in the United States. TESOL states that the general education in the United States mirrors the cultural background of the Native English speaking majority. A primary challenge of the educational system in the United States is to teach children to learn the skills necessary to live in an increasingly cultural diverse community. TESOL stresses the need for educational programs to take into account an understanding, respect and value of the diverse cultural backgrounds now growing in our schools. Cross-cultural competence begins in the early school years and is fostered by meaningful and long term interactions with different world views, experiences, cultures, and languages.

Furthermore, Virginia Jama discussed the necessity to meet the need of students learning English as a second language in "Integrating English as a Second language Instruction with Regular Elementary and Middle School Curriculum: Can It Work?" (1992). According to Jama:

> This vast number of students from different language backgrounds, often not from well-educated classes of their countries, poses a challenge to school administrators and teachers in many communities and demands that changes be made in curriculum development and delivery of instruction (p. 4).

Cecilia and Florante Parrenas argue that the schools in the United States have not embraced competent practices to deal with the changing demography and increased racial diversity in our country. They continue to state that this unwillingness to embrace competent practices has created poor race relations within the schools. According to the Parrenas:

> ...the problem with race relations is progressive. Each school year, students choose fewer friends outside their own ethnic or cultural group. At early elementary school, children work easily in mixed racial groups, but by the end of elementary school they begin to segregate themselves along race lines (p. 183-184).

The Parrenas conclude their discussion by stating that the progressive deterioration of race relations among students isn't inevitable. There are strategies that schools can use to create positive race relations. If schools become aware of, and begin to use appropriate strategies, students will choose more friends from other races and interact in a more integrated way.

The inevitable placing of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the same classroom challenges teachers across the nation to find appropriate strategies to promote acceptance and interaction within the classroom.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

There are one hundred and four students in the four targeted classrooms, thirty-one of whom have a Spanish background. As the numbers indicate, the Spanish culture is the largest group represented in the targeted classrooms, aside from the majority which are native English speaking students. There are a minimal number of students from backgrounds other than Spanish or native English speakers because they were able to speak English fluently.

There are many types of evidence to document the lack of interaction between English speaking and Spanish speaking students at the site school. Peer interaction checklists, socio-grams, demographics, socio-economic information, and cultural diversity within the classrooms clearly evidence the problem.

In order to document the frequency of peer interactions, a peer interaction checklist was used (See Appendix A). During the first few weeks of school, students in the targeted classrooms were observed and interactions were recorded based on the following four categories: requests/gives peer help, participates in peer conversation, chooses playmates, and chooses partner for partnered activities. Interactions were tallied based on whether a child chose a peer of the same or different language as his own native language. In each of the four categories, as depicted in the following graphs (See figures 1-4), the vast majority of students chose a peer of the same language as their own.

Data From Peer Interaction Checklist

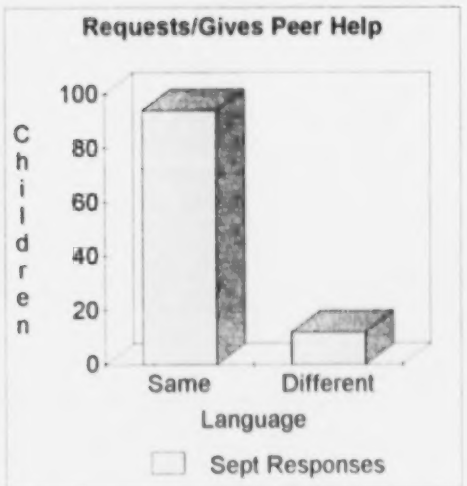

Figure 1

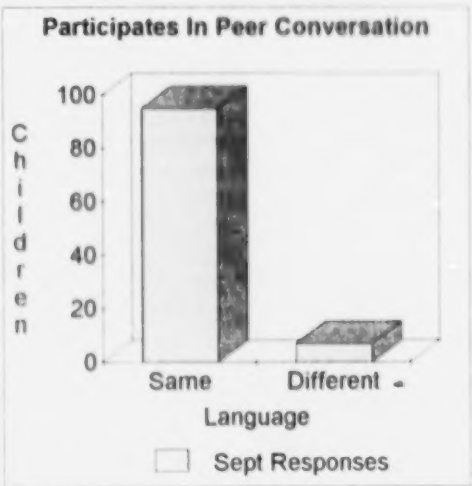

Figure 2

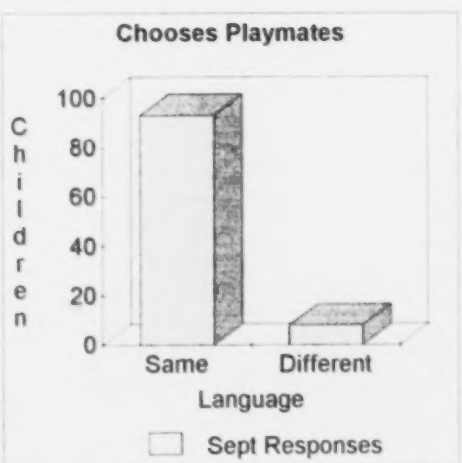

Figure 3

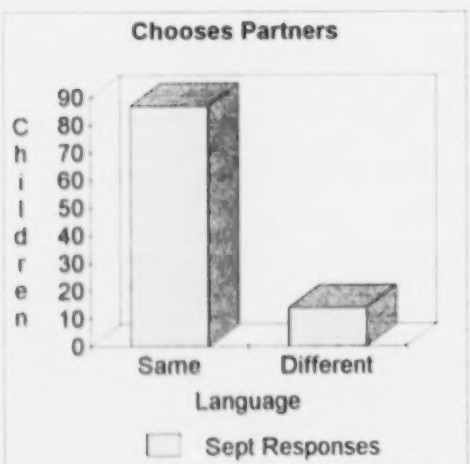

Figure 4

A socio-gram (See Appendix B) was also used to measure student preferences in choosing friends in the targeted classrooms. Children were asked to answer the following questions:

1. Who would you pick to play a game with?

2. Who would you like to invite to your home?

3. Who is your best friend?

4. Pick someone that you don't know that you would like to get to know.

The answers were tabulated by whether the students stated that their preferred choice was a peer of the same language as their own or different. The numbers were tabulated, and the results are shown on the following graphs (See figures 5-8).

Data From Socio-Gram

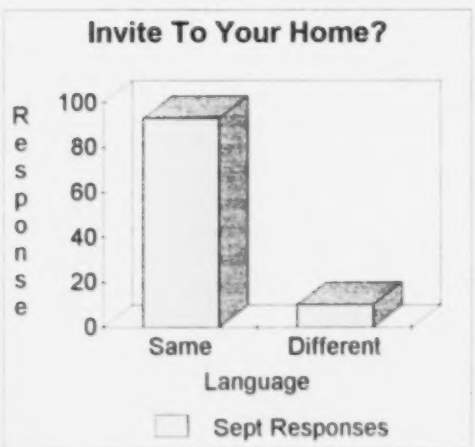

Figure 5

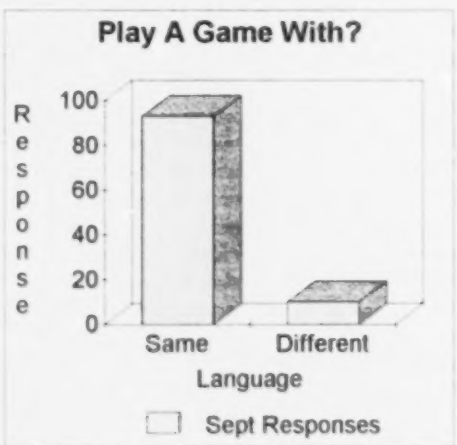

Figure 6

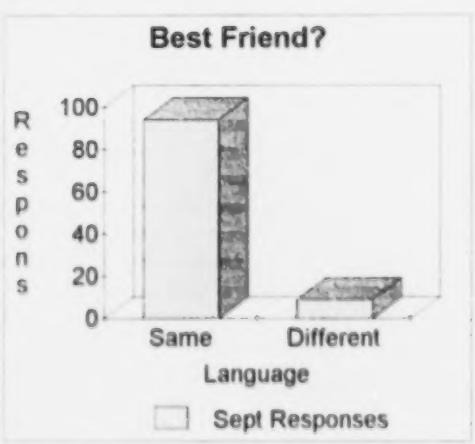

Figure 7

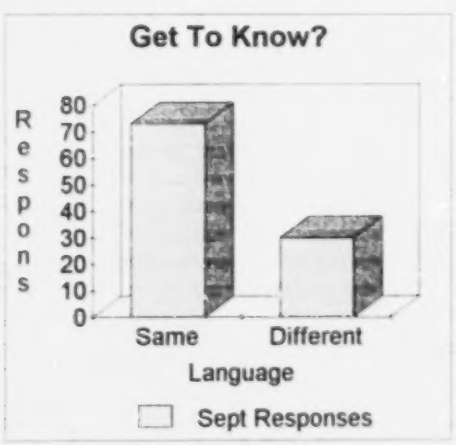

Figure 8

By and large, the majority of students' preferred "playmate" choices were children that spoke the same language as they did. For the question, "Who (from our class) would you like to invite to your home?" for example, only ten children chose a child who spoke a different language, while a whopping ninety-three would choose a "playmate" who spoke the same language as their own.

Evidence of differences in socio-economic levels is found in analyzing the free and reduced lunch numbers in the four targeted classes. Twenty-four out of twenty-seven free and reduced lunch students are Hispanic. Free and reduced lunches are determined by family income. Therefore, families with children receiving free and reduced lunches are on a low socio-economic level. Socio-economic differences in themselves may not be a barrier to peer interactions. The difference, however, appears to be another factor leading to the lack of peer interaction.

Another reason for the lack of interaction between Spanish and Native English speaking students is evidenced by where the students in the targeted classrooms reside. As indicated by the following graph (See figure 9), there are five major neighborhoods that the students in the targeted classrooms are pulled. The majority of the students in these classes come from neighborhood A. Ninety-nine percent of the Hispanic students in the targeted classrooms live in neighborhood A. This contributes to the lack of interaction between the two language groups in that they are socially and physically separated outside the classroom.

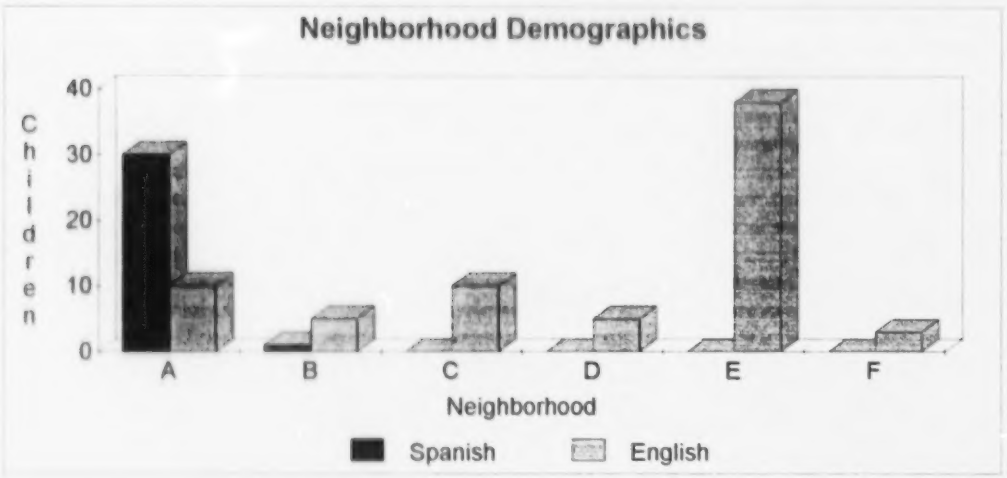

Figure 9

Probable Causes

Cultural differences contribute to lack of interaction among bilingual students and native English speaking students. In their 1972 study, Kagan and Madsen found that Mexican-American children tend to avoid conflict and are less rivalrous and aggressive than Anglo-American children. Recent Mexican-American immigrants from rural agricultural settings tend to be less competitive and more interdependent socially and economically (Kagan, Knight, Martinez, and Espinosa-Santana, 1981). Hispanic-American children are more likely to have been taught to value cooperative relationships and family loyalty, and therefore may respond more to praise that emphasizes family pride rather than individual glory (Biehler and Snowman, 1993). One cultural difference that is evident in the classroom stems from the fact that although bilingual students may want to participate by asking questions, they feel uncomfortable doing so because, in some cultures, it is considered disrespectful to ask questions of a teacher (Zehler, 1993).

Another reason for the lack of peer interaction between students in the classroom has roots in the teaching methods chosen by the teacher. The way in which teachers structure learning activities within the classroom determines how students interact with each other.

Traditional methods of teaching emphasize competition and discourage students from learning the social skills it requires to get to know one another on a noncompetitive basis (Johnson and Johnson, 1978). Cecilia and Florante Parrenas (1990) also note that schools that rely primarily on competitive and individualistic instruction negatively impacts the social development of their students. The trend of competitiveness in American classrooms also creates a climate that can hinder interaction between students. Classrooms must support feelings of belonging, acceptance and caring rather than feelings of rejection and hostility seen in competitive atmospheres. By not ensuring that students interact with each other in a supportive and caring environment, the teacher denies the student chances to learn the necessary social skills needed to reduce isolation (Johnson, 1981).

Furthermore, traditional teaching methods are dominated by teacher-centered instruction which are characterized by teacher lectures and individualized seat work as the main strategies for teaching. These strategies discourage peer interaction within the classroom. These strategies assume that the student's development and socialization primarily depend on their interaction with the teacher. They deprecate the impact and importance of peer relations and view the small amount of peer interaction within the classroom as bothersome and disruptive (Johnson, 1981). As teachers continue to use traditional methods they neglect to adapt their strategies to ones that would most benefit peer interaction of the bilingual student (Zehler, 1994). Without structures promoting positive peer interaction and strategies that teach social skills for improving relations, students remain detached from one another and miss out on benefits gotten from valuable resources their peers present. The need for teachers to be aware of the necessity to structure activities that allow students of all levels of English proficiency to participate in order to encourage, include and assist them in the classroom setting has also been noted by Cochran (1989). To reach students with different linguistic backgrounds, teachers need to use alternative strategies and break away from traditional, prevalent patterns that promote lack of interaction between students.

Another reason for the lack of interaction between bilingual and native English speaking students can be traced to the types of programs offered to bilingual students within the school. Over the years, educators have recognized that just throwing bilingual students into the regular classroom was not successful. Special programs have been developed to alleviate the situation but these programs have their drawbacks. One type of program, the Transitional Bilingual program, introduces English to bilingual students while teaching subject matter in the native language until the student knows enough English to get along in a mainstream classroom. In this situation, the bilingual students often don't learn enough English to move successfully into English speaking peer groups. This forces the bilingual student to stay isolated in their own language similar peer groups. Another bilingual program where students are pulled out of the mainstream classroom to learn the subject matter in their native language also has drawbacks. This method segregates children from their peers and isolates them from mainstream American education and their native English speaking peers (Jama, 1992).

Another probable cause for the lack of interaction is prejudice due to stereotyping and lack of understanding of a minority culture.

> A stereotype is a mental category based on exaggerated and inaccurate generalizations used to describe all members of a group. Stereotypes are erroneous beliefs, either favorable or unfavorable, that are applied universally without exception (Bennett, 1990).

Stereotyping of bilingual students can lead to lower self-esteem which affects interaction. Richard-Amato (1988) tells us that

> When negative stereotypes are attributed to second language students, they may become internalized and could undermine attempts at language acquisition. Not only do negative stereotypes affect the self esteem of the group's members, but they often bring about negative attitudes toward the target language culture.

Prejudices and stereotypes are documented in the lower expectations of teachers for Mexican-American students. Bennett cites studies by Gay, Rist, and the U.S. Civil Rights commission showing that many teachers had lower expectations for darker-skinned children and that teachers interacted with those low-expectation students in intellectually limiting ways. Teachers, like others, are often unaware of their own prejudices. This seems to make a good case for more teacher in-service training in multicultural education (Bennett, 1990).

There are numerous other probable causes for the lack of interaction between students that have their conception in parenting practices. Cecilia and Florante Parrenas (1990) express the growing problem of children not coming to school as respectful, helpful or cooperative as they were twenty years ago. They state that many parents today are too permissive or absent in their children's lives. Consequently, pro social skills necessary to get along with others, such as how to cooperate, share and take turns aren't taught to their children (Canter and Peterson, 1995). Additionally, the mobility of many families deprives children of creating enduring relationships. Children seem to have less contact with significant others outside the school, relationships that are imperative to social development and the ability to interact with one's peers (Parrenas and Parrenas, 1990). Also, may have had personal school experiences that create obstacles limiting involvement in their children's academic careers. Linguistic differences can also keep parents away from school. Using young children to translate for parents at conferences id against culture because it places children in a position of equal status with adults (Finders and Lewis, 1994). Hispanic parents can also feel overwhelmed at school presentations, preferring a more personal and warm sharing with teachers and principals (Howe, 1994). Many bilingual parents may also have economic and time constraints which can keep them from getting involved in school activities. Furthermore, parents of bilingual students who may have high academic standards for their children and may want to participate in their child's school career can feel restricted due to linguistic differences and sometimes even excluded from participation by the school (ED333622).

Lastly, there has been research done on the effect of television on student's social skills and their abilities to interact with one another. In many families, television is a substitute teacher

for socialization skills. Television, specifically violence on television, provides a poor role model for social development (Parrenas and Parrenas, 1990). The violence found in cartoons, movies, and video games that children are exposed to pervade their imaginations. Children learn that violence is an appropriate way to interact with one another (Canter and Peterson, 1995). Television also decreases interpersonal interactions with family members. As the family starts orientating themselves around television, rather than each other, opportunities for children to learn socialization skills are lost Parrenas and Parrenas, 1990).

Based on the evidence provided by the peer interaction checklists, socio-grams, demographic, cultural, and socio-economic data, in conjunction with information gained through literature-based evidence, numerous obstacles have formed a wall that barricades interaction between children of different languages and cultures. There is a need to help them break through that wall.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Classroom climate has an influence on peer interaction. The goal is to provide a positive atmosphere. The teacher needs to value every student and be sensitive to their needs. Zehler (1994) suggested key elements for maintaining a positive classroom climate. The classroom should be predictable and understanding to all students. Each child needs to feel safe, and they need to feel comfortable with themselves and environment. "A supportive environment is built by the teacher on several grounds. There is acceptance, interest, and understanding of different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and customs"(Zehler, 1994, p. 6). The child needs exact directions on what is expected of him or her. When this behavior is occurring daily through structured activities, the student will feel an important emotional and social base. They will begin to take risks with other peers in the classroom. Teachers are able to increase feelings of comfort by having structured classroom rules and activities, explicit expectations, and sincere care and concern for each child. The activities in the classroom should allow plenty of opportunities for dialogue. With each child at his or her own level of language proficiency, there needs to be ample time for communication to take place. Students need to be involved in the tasks as active players. Children seem to contribute more if they are able to act out a role and when the activity is both meaningful and challenging.

Gutierrez's study (as cited in Duran & Szymanski, 1993) found that it is the teacher's organization of classroom communication that is crucial to the children interacting. Gutierrez has studied ways in which learning activities of Latino and other ethnically diverse students build the

students' social identities. According to Gutierrez, "Students are most involved and active in learning when they are given an opportunity to decide topics that might be initiated and explored in learning activities" (Duran & Szymanski, 1993, p. 4).

Cochran (1989) reported some helpful information about Limited English proficiency (LEP) student and their language development. Teachers should expect students to start developing the English language with a "silent period." This means that the student understands some amounts of English but is not ready to talk. Teachers need to keep in mind that when the student's speech emerges and they acquire more vocabulary, LEP students will be involved in more classroom activities.

Krashen's study (as cited in Cochran, 1989) shows that the students want to speak more when they are in small groups. They feel more comfortable to take risks, and then will become more fluent. To provide a climate that is not threatening, it is suggested that teachers have their students work in small groups. This can have a positive influence on peer interaction.

It is necessary that the teachers build an understanding of the culture of minority students that are in the classroom. If there is an understanding about the diversity of student behavior as it relates to their culture, it would be easier for the students to interact and communicate with their peers. (Christina, 1992) For example, some language minority students come from cultures which encourage cooperative interaction. They may feel more comfortable in an environment where there is shared learning. (Cochran, 1989).

Biehler and Snowman (1993) also about the importance of becoming familiar with the differences and similarities of students from different ethnic groups. Chris Bennet (as cited in Biehler & Snowman, 1993) identifies five aspects of ethnicity that are causes of student-student and student-teacher misunderstanding: verbal communication, nonverbal communication, orientation modes, social value patterns, and intellectual modes. If the teacher takes time to learn about the different ethnic groups that are present in the classroom, and then teaches the rest of the class, a positive interacting atmosphere an be established.

Educators need to bring diversity into the classroom and allow children to be exposed to a variety of beliefs, practices, and values (Phillips, 1992). There are four ways that Biehler & Snowman, (1993) justify incorporating a multicultural program in the classroom. One is that the program aides is teaching practices that are beneficial for everyone, and for members in a certain ethnic group. An example of this would be showing an interest in a student through smiling and allowing the child to tutor a younger student are practices most children can benefit from. A second reason in favor for multicultural education is that it allows all students to gain from understanding different cultural values. A third point in support is that the United States is becoming an increasingly multicultural society. The students in the classrooms need to understand how to work with other students that have cultures different from theirs. The last factor is that multicultural programs can help student motivation and learning. When you have a program in the classroom, it shows respect for a student's culture and teaches about the contributions that culture has made to American society.

Christina sums it up with this statement, "The necessity of understanding the changing demographics of community and the cultural differences that surface due to change must be accepted and incorporated into the curriculum by the school personnel if minority children and families are to view school as a place of acceptance." (Christina, 1992, p. 14)

Multicultural education programs are needed because they are based on relationships among cultural background, self esteem, motivation, and learning. When developing a program, these key concepts should be addressed: ethnic identity, culture, ethnic community, racism, communication, self concept, and power. The teaching methods of cooperative learning and peer tutoring should also be a part of the multicultural education.

According to Phillips, (1992) by implementing multicultural education in the classroom, a goal is to counteract bias and stereotypes. The children need to be taught different ways to get along with each other and know what is fair and right. Just being around children from different cultural groups is not enough. They need to be taught. The teachers need to be the role models

and show the students how to interact with others. A hope is that the children begin to stand up for themselves and respect the rights of others.

As part of creating a positive school climate, the minority children and their families need to feel welcome. Jim Cummins (1991) shared a list of ways that schools and classroom can celebrate culture diversity. Cummins reminds the educators that if the school accepts and respects the language and culture of all of its students, the students start to feel comfortable and confident enough to take the chance of getting involved and interacting. New Zealand's Department of Education (as cited in Cummins, 1991, p. 1&2) gives the following suggestions:

* Reflect the various cultural groups in the school district by providing signs in the main office and elsewhere that welcomes people in the different languages of the community.
* Encourage students to use their first language around the school.
* Provide opportunities for students from the same ethnic group to communicate with one another in their first language where possible. An example could be in cooperative groups on at least some occasions.
* Incorporate greetings and information in the various languages in newsletters and other official school communications.
* Provide bilingual and/or multi-lingual signs
* Display pictures and objects of the various cultures represented at the school
* Create units of work that incorporate other languages in addition to the school language
* Provide opportunities for students to study their first language in elective subjects and /or in extracurricular clubs
* Encourage parents to help in the classroom, library, playground, and in clubs
* Invite people from minority groups to act as resource people and to speak to students in both formal and informal settings

Ellen Kottler (1994) encourages the use of multicultural materials in the classroom. She suggested that posters should be put up that show the diversity of people and customs in our society. Examples could be putting up various alphabet types used around the world or pictures of people's faces from around the world. Exposing students to different kinds of music and art is beneficial. It is also a good idea to bring speakers into the room to share food, clothing, values, and mannerisms from different cultures. Sharing different literature from various cultures is another great way for students to learn about others. Barbara Christina (1992) also used friendship books to reflect the cultural and socioeconomic diversity in the classroom.

Research that was done by Duran & Szymanski (1993) suggests that LEP students do want to connect their cultural and social identities to activities that occur in the classroom. It is up to the teacher to provide opportunities that allow the children to feel comfortable with sharing and making connections to their everyday lives.

Traditional classroom structures do not seem to be enhancing student interaction, in fact, they often promote student competitiveness (Parrenas & Parrenas, 1990), so some type of alternative to traditional classroom structure is necessary to promote student interaction, especially involving students of different language and cultural backgrounds.

In direct contrast to traditional classroom structure is cooperative learning, which is based on student interactions its very core. Cooperative learning involves fostering cooperation among group members (Ringdahl et al., 1986), as well as increasing student confidence and positive social behaviors.

Non-English speaking students, who are accustomed to a traditional passive classroom environment may have some difficulty at first in adjusting to a new and different classroom situation, but if they, as well as all members of the class, are coached and encouraged they cannot only feel comfortable with working in cooperative groups, but can greatly benefit as well. For example, cooperative learning can promote all students' self- esteem and also motivation to learn, especially for limited English proficient students who may be at risk (Calderon 1990).

There must be at least two important factors present in order for successful cooperative learning to be effective (Parrenas & Parrenas, 1990).

First, the heterogeneous groups must have a group goal. A team effort is necessary, and each individual in that group has an important contribution to the team. By identifying with a team, the individuals have a chance to bond with each other, thereby forming positive relationships. Naturally, these positive relationships aren't likely to just happen simply because the children were put into cooperative groups. Specific social skills must be taught in order for students to have any success with the give-and-take, sharing and consensus-building necessary for successful group work to take place. (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). Formal instruction of social skills is required for cooperative learning. Included among these skills are communication, trust, leadership, and conflict resolution.

These skills need not only to be formally taught, but the students need to be able to practice them. Reminders need to be visible in the classroom, and the teacher and the students need to repeatedly encourage each other in using the skills.

The second factor that is important for successful cooperative learning to take place is individual accountability (Parrenas & Parrenas, 1990). Each individual in the group is accountable for their contribution to the team effort. No one can sit back, or pull back because then the group would not be able to achieve its goal. Individual accountability also prevents one or two members of the group from taking over or doing all the work. It also allows all members of the group glory in achieving the goal, since all contributed an essential component necessary in achieving the goal.

There are other cooperative learning methods, but research shows that if both group goals and accountability are incorporated, the positive effects are much greater (Parrenas & Parrenas, 1990).

Cooperative Learning has been proven to enhance social skills as well as academic achievement for students, but it can be especially effective for LEP. students because it has been shown to be an effective way to foster respect and friendship among heterogeneous groups of

students (Cochran, 1989). The LEP students also benefit from the face to face interactions which are inherent in cooperative learning and from the communication that takes place that is both natural and meaningful (Jacob & Mattson, 1987). It is also less threatening to ask for clarification or offer suggestions in the small group, as opposed to the often intimidating whole classroom group. In fact, cooperative learning provides frequent opportunities to speak without fear of rejection or humiliation because cooperation, friendship, and positive group dynamics are carefully fostered. The assigned roles inherent in cooperation learning also help to delegate authority and to equalize the status of all of the group members.

In order to solve the problem of lack of interaction among English and non-English speaking students, the best possible solution appears to be utilizing cooperative learning strategies and incorporating multicultural education into our classrooms.

Project Objectives and Outcomes

As a result of the implementation of cooperative learning with a multicultural flavor, during the period of September, 1996, to January, 1997, the targeted students will increase interaction between Spanish-speaking and native English speaking students, as measured by socio-grams, peer interaction checklists, and teacher observation.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Instruction of cooperative learning strategies.
2. Develop cooperative learning activities that can be integrated into subject matter (See Appendix C).
3. Develop cooperative learning activities that can address cultural diversity.

Project Action Plan

I. Instruction of cooperative learning strategies.

A. Direct instruction of social skills.

1. Communication.

a. Use a 6" voice.

b. Listen to your neighbor.

c. Take turns.

d. Stay with your group.

2. Trust

a. Respect each other's opinions.

b. Keep an open mind.

c. Everyone does their job.

3. Leadership

a. Help each other.

b. Encourage others.

c. Stay on task.

d. Everyone participates.

4. Conflict resolution

a. Seeking consensus.

b. See all points of view.

c. Try to agree.

B. Setting up groups.

1. Establish base groups.

a. Spanish and English speaking children are combined.

b. Boys and girls are combined in groups.

2. Task Groups

a. interest groups

b. unifix cubes

c. pattern blocks

d. cards

e. puzzle pieces

f. candy

C. Class climate

1. Room arrangement

a. group seating (rather than rows)

b. gathering place

c. student mobility

2. Classroom displays

a. bulletin boards

b. group work

c. posters

3. Interpersonal relations

a. business cards

b. picture frame

c. people search

II. Subject matter

A. Language Arts

1. Kindergarten

a. story sequencing

b. letter recognition

c. predicting

2. First Grade

a. predicting

b. sequencing

c. story webs

3. Third Grade

a. spelling

b. reading comprehension

c. predicting

B. Math

1. Kindergarten

a. shapes

b. color recognition

c. number recognition

2. First Grade

a. problem solving

b. estimation

c. addition

3. Third Grade

a. problem solving

b. addition

c. subtraction

C. Social Studies/ Science

1. Kindergarten

a. fall (seasons)

b. senses

c. self-awareness

2. First Grade

a. fall

b. feelings

c. Native Americans

3. Third Grade

a. city

b. map skills

c. matter

III. Multicultural

A. Literature (See Appendix D)

1. story webs
2. literature circles
3. paired reading
4. student-made books
5. class-made books
6. holidays and celebrations

B. Games and Music

1. Spanish version of "Happy Birthday"
2. class- made pinata
3. El Reloj (game) "The Clock"
4. Toma Todo (game)

C. Sharing Individual Cultures

1. "All About Me" book
2. "Super Star of the Week"
3. "Star Attraction"
4. Show and Tell

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, peer interaction checklists will be utilized, at both the beginning and end of the study, to note any changes in the students' interactions. These checklists will be recorded by the teachers, while observing student behavior at times when the children have free choice in choosing their companions. The teachers will note whether children choose to associate with other children who are of similar or different cultural background as themselves.

The children will be also be asked to fill out socio-grams, at both the beginning and end of the study. The socio-grams will ask the children to name other children in the class that they would like to get to know better, play a game with, etc.

In addition, throughout the intervention period, teachers will be keeping anecdotal records and journals to further document student interaction.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase interaction between native English speaking students and Spanish speaking students. Cooperative learning strategies such as direct instruction of social and cooperation skills, cooperative activities integrated into the subject matter, and cooperative techniques used to address cultural diversity were implemented in order to achieve this objective.

The class population changed slightly in a few of the classrooms since the beginning of the project. Three Spanish speaking children and one English speaking child moved during the research. Another Spanish speaking child was added to one of the classrooms.

Also, the original time schedule was set up for cooperative lessons to focus on one subject area per month. The teachers found themselves implementing cooperative learning activities involving Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, and multicultural awareness more frequently than the original schedule.

The intervention was the use of cooperative learning in the classroom. Students were put into heterogeneous base groups, and received direct instruction in social skills at the beginning of the school year. Trust, leadership, and conflict resolution were key concepts that the children needed to learn and employ before any academic cooperative lessons could take place. After the students had practiced and demonstrated some internalization of the social skills, the teachers went on to familiarize students with the basic framework of cooperative learning. Base and task groups were assigned, roles and role cards were defined, group rules were reviewed, and

encouraging "energizers" were practiced. It's important to note that social skills were reviewed ongoing.

Classroom climate established a warm, nurturing, accepting environment. It's important to note that the children were heterogeneously seated at all times, even when not involved in specific cooperative projects or lessons. Classroom displays reflected both cooperative group work and multicultural awareness. Cooperative learning techniques were used not only to teach social skills and academics, but cultural diversity as well.

Many of the tasks and projects had a multicultural flavor. All of the classrooms had signs, posters, artifacts and books in both English and Spanish. A listing of multicultural books, games, etc. can be found in the appendix.

The action plan called for 2-3 cooperative lessons per week. Four sample cooperative lesson plans can be found in the appendix. One lesson is on story sequencing for the kindergarten level, another is a first grade lesson in Social Studies. Two third grade lesson plans are included, one in Math, and another on social skills.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Data gathered in September was based upon two measurement tools- a socio-gram and a checklist. The percentages of students who chose peers of the same or different language as their own for various activities were noted.

Data From Socio-Gram

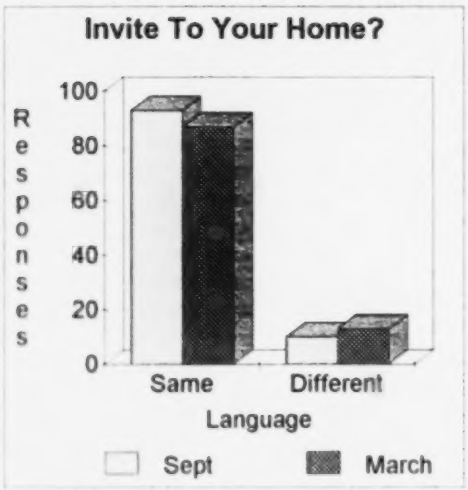

Figure 10

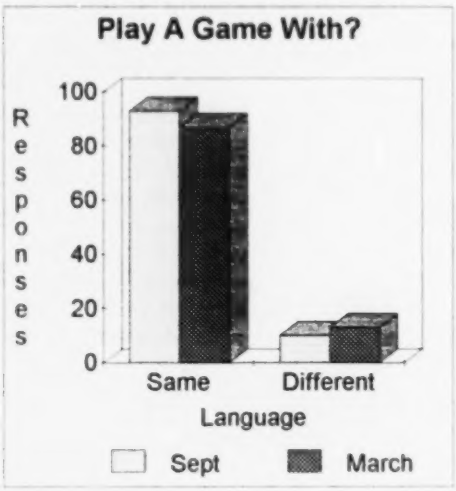

Figure 11

Figure 12

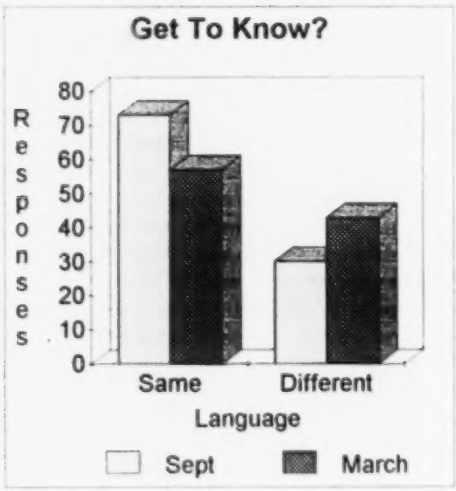

Figure 13

The socio-gram consisted of four questions. Question one asked, "Who would you pick to play a game with?" The September findings showed 93 chose children of the same language as their own, and 10 chose children who spoke a different language. In March, the numbers went up

to 13 for those who chose children of a different language. Question two asked, "Who would you like to invite to your home?" In September, the numbers were consistent with the first question. Ninety-three chose children of the same language, and 10 chose children of a different language. In March, the findings again should a rise to 13 for those who chose a different language child. Question three asked, "Who is your best friend?" In September, 94 chose a child of the same language, and only 9 chose a child of a different language. The March data showed an increase to 12 children that identified a best friend who spoke a language different than their own. Question four asked children to "Pick someone that you don't know, that you would like to get to know." In September, 73 someone of the same language, and 30 chose someone of a different language. In March there was arise to 43 for those choosing someone of a different language.

There was a slight increase from September to March in children choosing different language students for playing games, inviting to their home, and picking a best friend. There was a more significant increase in the percentage of children wanting to get to know children of a different language. This may have been a result of using multicultural education to increase awareness and appreciation of children of other cultures. It is important to note that in all of the questions, there was an increase in children's responses to choose a peer of a different language and culture than their own (See figures 10-13).

The second measurement tool, a checklist, noted interactions between children of same and different languages in four areas (See figures 14-17). The first area was requesting and giving help. In September, 94 interacted with same language students, and 12 interacted with different language students. In March, the numbers of those interacting with different language students rose to 48. The second area observed was participating in peer conversation. In September, 95 conversed with same language students, and only 7 interacted with different language students. In March, those interacting with different language students rose to 48. The third are involved choosing playmates. The September interaction with same language children was 93, and those choosing a playmate of a different language numbered only 8. In March there was a significant rise in number to 44. The fourth area was choosing partners for a partnered activity. In

September, 87 chose someone of the same language, and 14 chose someone of a different language. In March there was a rise to 28 for those choosing someone of a different language.

Data From Peer Interaction Checklist

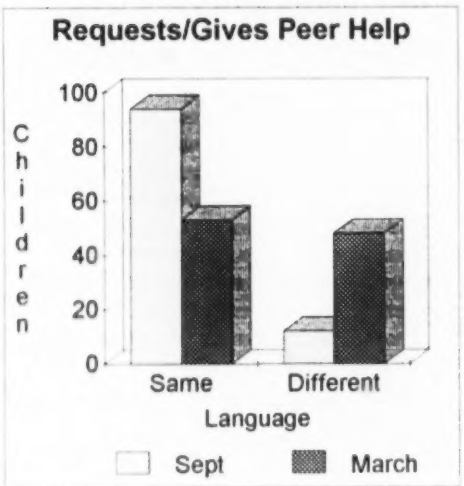

Figure 14

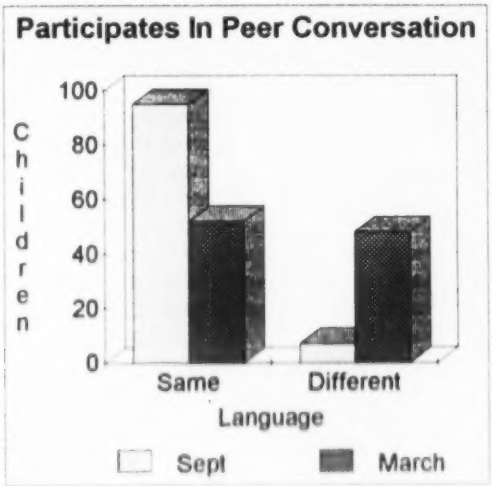

Figure 15

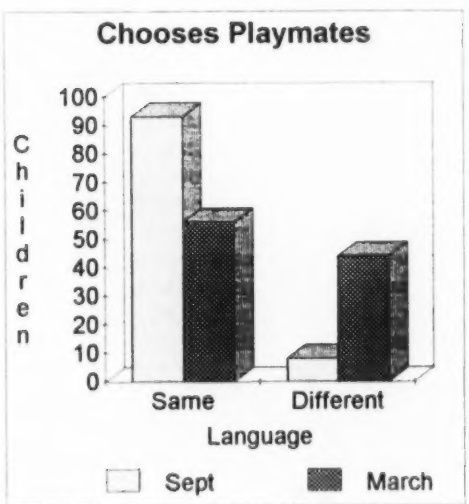

Figure 16

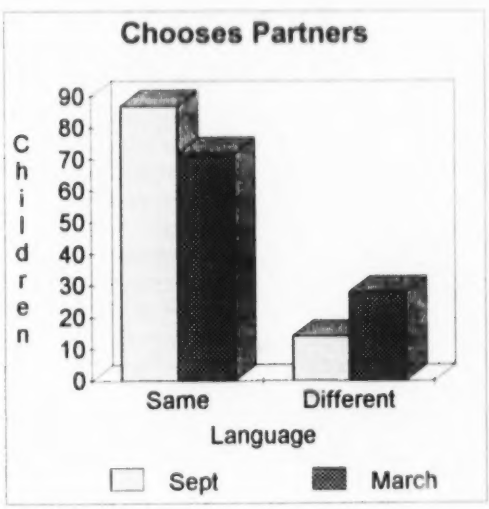

Figure 17

There was a significant rise in the number of children choosing different language peers in all four areas on the checklist. This increase in peer interaction is a result of getting to know and trust each other through cooperative group activities.

There were slight to significant increases from September to March in peer interactions between same and different language students in all the areas measured. These changes were a direct result of the treatment- cooperative learning strategies and multicultural education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data presented evidences documentation of the increases in peer interaction between English speaking and Spanish speaking students at the targeted school. What the data does not show, however, is the significant changes that took place involving the classroom climate.

At the beginning of the school year, students could frequently be overheard making negative comments about their different-language peers. There was clear demarcation between the groups on the playground, in the lunchroom, etc. Children would not acknowledge their school peers when confronted at the mall or the park.

After students internalized the team-building attributes so essential in cooperative learning, as well as learned about each other's cultures through multicultural education, their attitudes towards each other greatly changed. The teachers observed these changes not only in the classroom, but on the playground, and in the lunchroom as well. Students also commented excitedly to teachers about seeing and talking to their friends (of a different language) at the mall or the park. Seldom, if ever, was a negative comment made about a classmate of any language or cultural background.

The overall classroom, school, and, to some degree, neighborhood climate improved over the course of this project, though the peer interaction checklist and the socio-gram depict just a piece of the entire picture.

Based on the data presented, then, interaction between the English speaking and Spanish speaking students increased significantly. This was a direct result of the implementation of cooperative learning strategies designed to teach social skills and heighten cultural awareness.

Students chose different language peers for both academic and non-academic activities. Stereotyping was reduced, while self-concept improved. Students from different cultures bonded through team-building activities. Teams provided a sense of belonging to all members, and created a framework of mutual support that extended beyond the cooperative activities.

This research project supports the use of cooperative learning when trying to increase peer interaction between students of vastly different languages and cultures. An important consideration before implementing cooperative learning lessons is to set up a supportive classroom climate and to also focus on the direct instruction of social skills. Group instruction must be reinforced regularly, not abandoned after the initial instruction.

It is also important to keep in mind that students should be heterogeneously grouped as much as possible- not just during targeted group times. This project supports the fact that exposing students to a variety of cultures is beneficial to breaking down stereotypes and building up self-esteem and team work. It also emphasizes similarities between people, not differences.

This study has effectively demonstrated that cooperative learning and multicultural education can positively impact students' self-concept, peer relations, and school climate. It can also embody not only tolerance, but appreciation of others, which can have a life long affect on the future of our children.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Peer Interaction Checklist

TEACHER:
GRADE:
SCHOOL: EUCLID GRADE SCHOOL
DATE:

NO.	X	FIRST NAME:	LAST NAME:	Requests/Gives Peer Help	Participates in Peer Conversation	Chooses Playmates	Chooses Partner for Partnered Activities	Teacher Notes
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								
16								
17								
18								
19								
20								
21								
22								
23								
24								
25								
26								
27								
28								
29								
30								
Total Same Language								
Total Different Language								
Total # of Students								

Appendix B

Date_____

Socio Gram

Student Name _____

In this classroom

1 Who would you pick to play a game with?

2 Who would you like to invite to your home?

3 Who is your best friend?

4 Pick someone that you don't know that you would like to get to know

Appendix C
Sample Lesson Plans

Kindergarten Language Arts Lesson

Lesson	Story Sequencing (Kindergarten)
Objective	The children will determine the beginning, middle, and end of a story that they have heard and acted out.
Anticipatory Set	The teacher will show the children 3 bear masks (small, medium, and large) and explain that they will hear a story and work on a project involving these masks.
Materials	3 bear masks, the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, large roll of paper, markers or crayons
Plan	Show the children the 3 bear masks to set the stage for the lesson. Read the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Have children take turns role playing the story, using the bear masks and various props. Explain to the children that they will now get to draw the story plan- beginning, middle, and end with their friends. Divide the class into task groups and assign roles. Encourage the children to talk about and reach consensus over what parts of the story they should draw to illustrate the story parts. When the groups have finished drawing their story sequence, have each group report what they did to the class.
Evaluation	Draw a PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) chart on the chalkboard. Ask students to think about and describe what they liked (plus), didn't like (minus), or what they thought was interesting (I). Write the answers on the chart.
Reflection	The children in my class really enjoyed working together on the story sequencing. They not only learned how to sequence a story, but they also learned how to reach consensus and to work together as a group.

First Grade Social Studies and Language Arts Lesson

Lesson	Story webbing through social studies
Objective	The students will be exposed to a Native American folktale. Each group will produce a story web after hearing the story.
Anticipatory set	Show the children a bluebonnet flower and ask them if they know the story behind the flower. Why do we have bluebonnet flowers today?
Materials	The book The Legend of Blue Bonnet by Tomie DePaola, flower, crayons, markers, large paper with story web outlined on them, role cards (quiet captain, recorder, coach)
Plan	Have discussion about flower. Read The Legend of Blue Bonnet and hold discussion afterwards. Tell the class that they are going to work in task groups, producing a story web on The Legend of Blue Bonnet. You can use unifix cubes to break up in task groups and assign roles.
Evaluation	Each child will reflect in their journals. First, have them write on what they learned about a folktale. Second, the students should reflect in their groups. The recorder will write down a PMI. The groups will write down 3 positive things, 3 minuses, and 3 interesting things about the activity. Each group will then share.
Reflection	I think the lesson went well. The groups worked well together to accomplish the activity. Each child seemed to learn something about a folktale.

Third Grade Math Lesson

Lesson: The Four Triangles

Objective: The students will create and classify different polygons. The students will demonstrate knowledge and an understanding of geometry vocabulary - such as square, triangle, diagonal, polygon, quadrilateral, hexagon, pentagon.

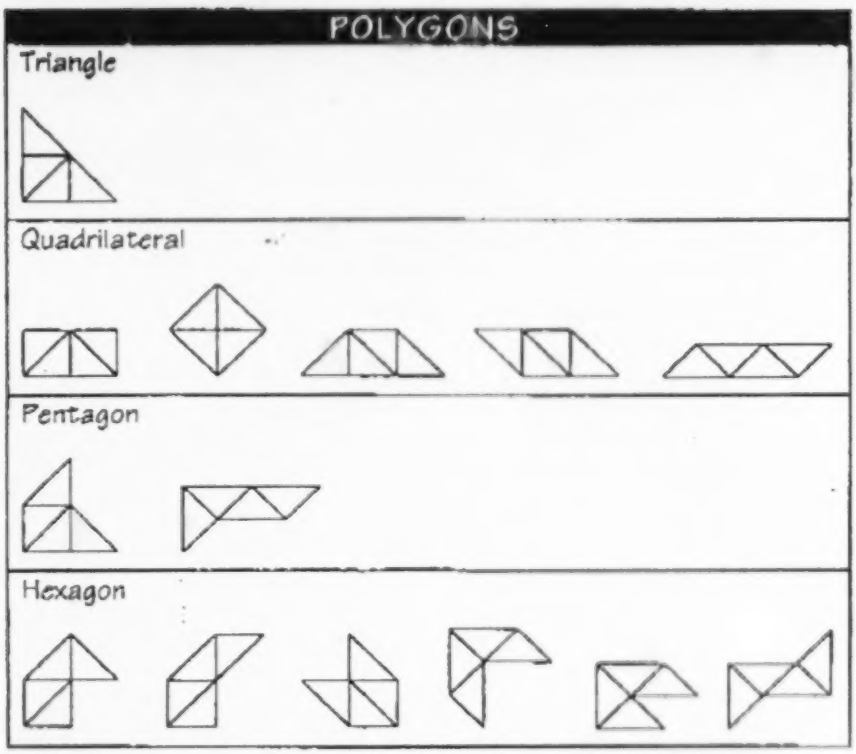
Materials: About 300 three inch squares of two different colors, chart paper for each group, scissors, tape, glue, The Greedy Triangle by Marilyn Burns.

Anticipatory Set: Read The Greedy Triangle and discuss how the triangle changed from shape to shape, as well as introduce the vocabulary- quadrilateral, pentagon, hexagon, etc.

Plan: Tell the students that they will be working in their base groups to make shapes from construction paper triangles. Show them how to get two triangles from one paper square by cutting on a diagonal. Tell them that when making a shape, there is one rule: The sides of the triangles that are put together must be the same length and match exactly.

Have students work to create shapes using two triangles. Discuss their results There are three possible shapes: square, triangle, and parallelogram.

Present the "4 Triangle Problem." Each base group must find all the possible arrangements using 4 triangles (two of each color). They must follow the same length. They need to follow the match exactly rule. When a group has exhausted all possibilities, have them sort the shapes by the number of sides each shape has. After sorting the shapes, the students can make a chart showing the classification of the shapes into the following groups- triangle, quadrilateral, pentagon, and hexagon.



Reflection

After all groups have finished, post the charts and discuss their similarities and differences.

Evaluation

All groups must have one completed chart. All shapes must be classified correctly by the number of sides each one has. Each group must find a minimum of 11/14 possible shapes.

Third Grade Social Skills Lesson

Lesson: Broken Circles

Anticipatory Set: Do you like puzzles? Most people do. Puzzles are challenging. We get satisfaction in successfully completing them.

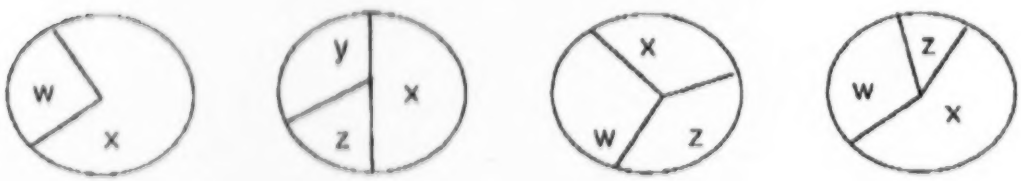
Materials: Sets of envelopes containing pieces of four broken circles, teacher directions, student directions

Plan: Children are grouped in fours. Each group receives an envelope with enough circle pieces to make four complete circles. Then each individual child gets two or three pieces. The teacher explains the rules. The object is to have each member of the group complete a circle. 1. No talking. 2. No pointing. 3. You can't take a piece from anyone else. 4. You can't put a piece in anyone else's circle. 5. No overlapping pieces. 6. You must use your own pieces or hope that someone else will give you a piece you can use. At GO, each child tries to put together a circle. The pieces are fixed so that there is only one way they will fit.

Evaluation: Some groups will successfully do the task. Some will not. Use Mrs. Potter's Questions to evaluate the strategies used. What worked? What didn't?

Reflection: It's not easy! Some get the idea quickly, but others just keep trying to use only their own pieces. Some stop when they finish their own circle, even though others can't get the right pieces to finish their circles. There can be a lot of frustration. When students finally see that they must help each other by giving pieces, they can then complete the group task. They also see the importance of sharing to successfully complete the task.

Circles should be divided so there is only one way to complete each.



Use four envelopes. Letter backs of pieces W, X Y, Z. Give an envelope to each member. Envelopes are lettered W, X, Y, Z. Have different set (different colors) for each group.

Appendix D

Multicultural Children's Literature

Aardema, Verna. Borreguite and the Coyote. Scholastic, N.Y. 1991

Aardema, Verna. The Crocodile and the Ostrich. Scholastic, N.Y. 1993

Aardema, Verna. Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears. Dial Press, N.Y. 1975

Anbolt, Catherine and Lawrence. All About You. Scholastic, N.Y. 1991

Baer, Edith. This is the Way We Go to School. Scholastis, N.Y. 1990

De Paola, Tomie. The Legend of the Bluebonnet. Scholastic, N.Y. 1989

De Paola, Tomie. The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush. G.R. Putnam's Sons, N.Y. 1988

Haley, Gail E. A Story, A Story. McClelland and Stewart Ltd., Canada 1970

Hayes, Joe. Antonio's Lucky Day. Scholastic, N.Y. 1993

Hayes, Joe. Coyote and the Butterflies. Scholastic, N.Y. 1993

Isadora, Rachel. At the Crossroads. Scholastic, N.Y. 1991

Kimmel, Eric A. Anansi Goes Fishing. Holiday House, N.Y. 1992

Martin, Bill and Archambault, John. Knots on a Counting Rope. Henry Holt and Co., N.Y. 1987

Martin, Rose. The Rough Faced Girl. Scholastic, N.Y. 1992

McLenan, Alice. Roxaboxen. Scholastic, N.Y. 1991

Morris, Ann. Bread, Bread, Bread. Scholastic, N.Y.

Pellegrini, Nina. Families Are Different. Scholastic, N.Y.

Soto, Gary. Too Many Tamales. Scholastic, N.Y. 1993

Perrine, Mary. Nanabah's Friend. Scholastic, N.Y. 1993

Walker, Barbara K. The Most Beautiful Thing in the World. Scholastic, N.Y. 1993